SOME FORGOTTEN LITTERATEURS OF MITHILĀ*

By

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From time immemorial Mithilā has been a famous seat of Sanskrit learning. Her sons and daughters have been great savants. They led a life dedicated to learning and received the highest distinction in the academic field. Their works brought an unstinted praise for their motherland. It is Mithilā, "where, in every house, Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, dances in pride on the tongue of the learned" so says Kavikarṇapūra in his poem entitled *Pārijātaharaṇa.*[1] But it is a matter of regret that only the eulogies have gained currency and the works that brought home an undying fame for Mithilā have been shoved to the background. Few know their names and fewer still their contents and merits. I, being a student of literature, hailing from Mithilā, am naturally interested in an account of the literary achievements of Mithilā, then and now. And with a view to assessing the position of Mithilā in the realm of Sanskrit ***belles-lettres*** I am trying to throw light on the hitherto unknown or less-known works of scholars from Mithilā.

In the present paper I propose to discuss two of them who are as follows.

1. Digambara

The Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University preserves a manuscript of *Virudāvalī*[2] composed by one Digambara of Mithilā.[3] It is a mixed composition in prose and verse. In it the author has extolled his patron King Uddyotacandra[4] of Kūrmācala (or Kumaun)[5] to skies He has also eulogised the qualities of the head and heart of the crown-prince under the caption '*rājātmajavirudam*' (a laudatory discourse upon the son of the

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1. 'Atra vijnavadanesu darpitā nrityati pratigriham sarasvati'—Pārijātaharana—XVII-59cd. Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1956.
2. Ms No. 11 in bundle No. 292.
3. The colophon of the manuscript reads—'iti sridigambarākhyamaithilaviracito virudāvalināmagranthah samāptim āsasāde'ti sivam I'
4. 'kalākarakulapradipah srimān uddyotacandro nama I yah kila—'
5. Vide pp. 109-110 of N. L. Dey's 'The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Mediaeval India,' Luzac & co. London, 1927.

king). The king is praised in prose-pieces as well as in verses bearing the heading '*Kūrmācaleśakalikā*' '*uddyotapadyāni*'[6] and the like.

It is worthy of note that the concluding verse of the *Virudāvalī*, which is as follows, is highly informative and on a perusal of it we are in a position to discover many hitherto unknown facts.

sānandaṁ kavivṛndavanditapadadvandvāravindaśriyo
vācāṁ dhāma digambaras tanujanuḥ śrīviṣṇudevasya yaḥ ।
chandovṛttarahasyasodaramukhāsvādātimodākulā
tasyo'ṣākarabandhanāṭakakṛtaḥ saiṣā kṛtir jīvatu ॥

On an analysis of the present verse we come to the conclusion that-

(a) Our author Digambara was the son of one Viṣṇudeva.

(b) This Viṣṇudeva was held in high esteem by the then poets.

(c) Our author had learnt the quintessence of Metrics from his full brother.

(d) Our author had written a drama entitled *Uṣākarabandha*.

Besides, some more information is also supplied to us by a post-colophon entry in the manuscript. While defining the nature of the Viruda or panegyric literature, of which the present work is an example, our author says —

'*Vistaras tva'tha sandheyo matkṛte vṛttarahasye*'

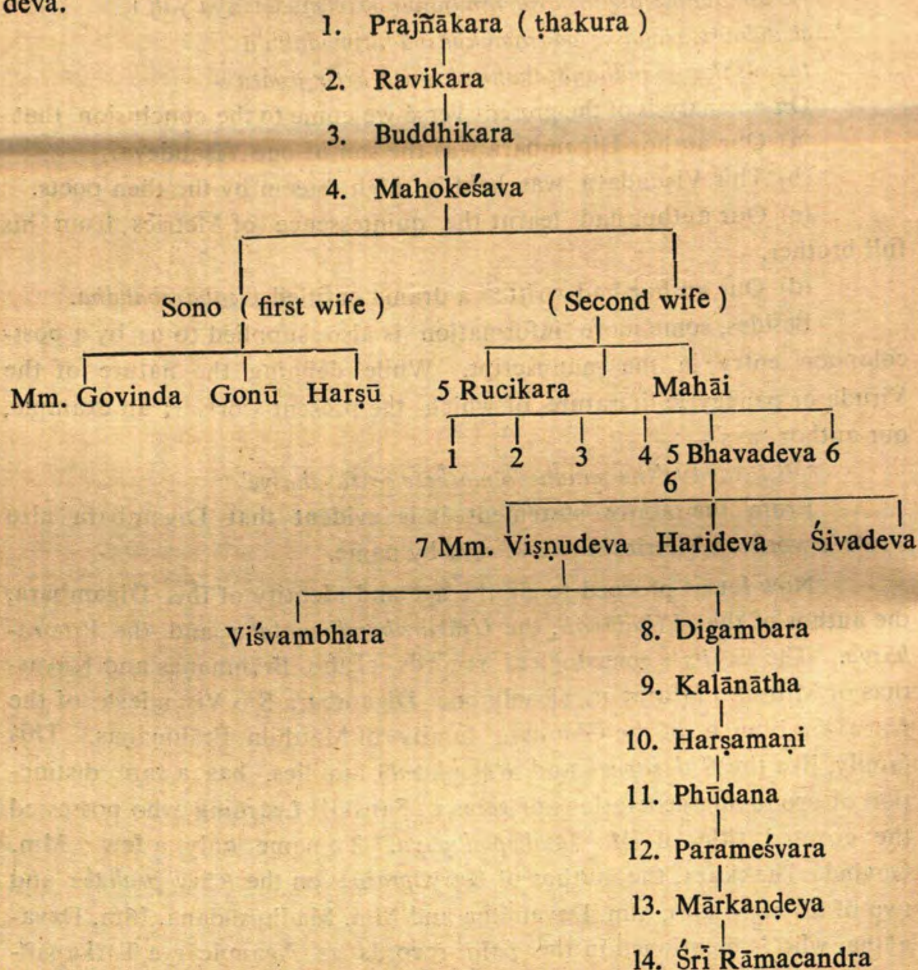
From the above statement it is evident that Digambara also wrote a work on Metrics *Vṛttarahasya* by name.

Now let us proceed to fix the age and identity of this Digambara, the author of the *Virudāvalī*, the *Uṣākarabandhanāṭaka* and the *Vṛttarahasya*. The *pañjīs* (genealogical records of the Brāhmaṇas and Kāyasthas of Mithilā) inform us of only one Digambara S/o Viṣṇudeva of the *Nagavāra* branch of the *Ghusauta* family of Maithila Brāhmaṇas. This family, like the *Sodarapura* and *Khaṇḍavalā* families, has a rare distinction of producing generations of gems of Sanskrit Learning who possessed the coveted title of *Mahāmahopādhyāya*. To name only a few : Mm. Govinda Thakkura, the author of *Kāvyapraīpa* on the *Kāvy prakāśa* and two of his eight sons, Mm. Devanātha and Mm. Madhusūdana. Mm. Devanātha, who is mentioned in the *pañjī*-records as Āgamācārya Tarkapañcānana Mm. Devanātha Ṭhakkura, is the celebrated author of the *saptakaumudīs*.. the *Adhikaraṇakaumudī*, the *Kālakaumudī* the *Kāvyakaumudī*, the *Tantrakaumudī*, the *Mantrakaumudī*, the *Siddhāntakaumudī* and the *Smṛtikaumudī*. Besides, he is also remembered for his monumental work

6. This expression may stand for both (1) the verses composed in the praise of king Uddyota and (2) the verses composed by that king himself. Of the two I am inclined to read the former meaning in it.

called *Ālokapariśiṣṭa*. And Mm. Madhusūdana is famous for his work *Kaṇṭakoddhāra*. In the *pañjī*-records as well he is called Kaṇṭakoddhāra-kāraka Mm. Madhusūdana.

We give below the relevant portion of the genealogical table of this illustrious family as preserved in the *pañjī*-records.[7] This may help us in fixing the age and identity of our author Digambara, son of Viṣṇudeva.



Prajñākara was married to the daughter of Mahāvārtikanaibandhika Dhīreśvara, the great-grand-father of Mm. Vidyāpati Ṭhakkura and as such he must have flourished in the thirteenth century A. D. during the reign of king Harisiṁhadeva. And we know that Śrī Rāmacandra, M. A.,

7. I am indebted to Pt. Ramānātha Jhā, M A., Kāvyatirtha, Reader in Maithili, Bihar University, for his valuable suggestions in connection with these records.

a pandit of the fourteenth generation of the direct line of the male descendants of Prajñākara is a young man of 28. And Digambara being the eighth from Prajñākara is nearly in the middle, preceded by seven and followed by six generations in the Prajñākara-Rāmacandra line. And since some seven hundred and fifty years have elapsed between Prajñākara and Rāmacandra it does not appear unreasonable to hold that our poet Digambara, who was the son of Mm. Viṣṇudeva, flourished during the second half of the sixteenth and the first quarter of the seventeenth century A. D. Or, if we take into account the institution of late marriage in the past we can safely place Digambara in the middle of the seventeenth century if not earlier.

As stated above, Digambara informs us that he composed the *Virudāvalī*, the *Uṣakarabandhanāṭaka* and the *Vṛttarahasya* but of these the only work available is the first, i. e., the *Virudāvalī* and the rest two are unfortunately lost to us.

2. Indrapati

In the Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University Library is preserved one more work[8] which is unknown to the students of Sanskrit Poetics. Its author Indrapati is also a new name for them. It is an unnamed work on Sanskrit Poetics dealing with the Figures of Speech. Unfortunately, the work is incomplete. The manuscript contains only the first twenty folios.[9] The second half or at least the last quarter of the work is missing.

Since the present work is incomplete it does not give us any direct information regarding the whereabouts of its author and we know, such information about Sanskrit authors are generally gathered from the concluding verses, colophons and post-colophon entries in their works. But there are still certain fragments in the present work which go a long way in determining the age and identity of the author. Immediately after the opening verse in which the author pays obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa[10] we have the following verse, which, when analysed, gives us some definite clue regarding the date of the author.

> *'nandīpater aparabādarināmakasya*
> *sammānitasya mithilādhipaviṣṇusiṁhaiḥ* ।
> *bhāṣākaver manasi toṣavivṛddhihetor*
> *enaṁ nibandham ayam indrapatis tanoti* ॥'

8. Ms. No. 13 of bundle No. 292.
9. The concluding line of the portion available is as follows :—
'utkarsasya' namānasya heto—kte prajayate upamānanikarsasya...
10. sobhitasankarasadanam kadanam duritasya yannām ।
vande tadekavadanam karivaravadanam dhāma ॥

The present verse informs us that :—

(i) This treatise is a composition of Indrapati.

(ii) Indrapati composed it for the mental satisfaction of Nandīpati.

(iii) Nandīpati was also called Bādari.

(vl) Nandīpati was a vernacular-poet (*bhāṣā-kavi*).

(v) Nandīpati was respected by Viṣṇusiṃha, the king of Mithilā.

We know about one Nandīpati S/o Sukavi Kṛṣṇapati of the *Pagauli* family of Maithila Brāhmaṇas. He was a Maithilī Poet. He composed the famous *Kṛṣṇakelimālā* and to him the authorship of several Maithilī songs is attribured. He had as many as 12 surnames of which Bādari and Kalānidhi are oft-quoted ones.[11] We are also informed of Viṣṇusiṃha, the king of Mithilā, who ascended the throne in the year 1739 A. D., reigned for a period of some months only and expired. And since he died issueless he was succeded by his younger brother Narendrasiṁha. But, who was this Indrapati ?

In reply to this question we simply bank upon a couple of verses cited by Indrapati in the present work as the composition of the brother of his grand-father (*pitāmahabhrātā*).

They are as follows—

(A) *gāndhārā guptadārās tvayi calati galadbāṣpadhārā vihārā*
gāḍhāstrāsāvagāḍhāḥ kṣitipakulamaṇe gurjjarājarjjarāśāḥ
tailaṅgās tyaktasaṅgās tribhuvanatilaka kliśyadaṅgāḥ kaliṅgā ।
moraṅgā muktaraṅgās sapadi samabhavan vīravaṅgā vihaṅgāḥ ।

(B) *kāmakrāntajalāntareṣu viharan jāgran nakhāgrakṣato*
nīcībhūtavalir jitāvanidharas sambaddharatnākaraḥ ।
śrīkhaṇḍadravapāṇḍurāgam atirodhāyī jaganmūrtakaḥ
śrīkṛṣṇasya daśāvatāratulanāṁ dhatte taruṇyās stanaḥ ॥

The first verse is quoted on the folio No 2A with the words *vṛttyanuprāso yathā' smatpitāmahabhrātṛcaraṇasya* preceding it where as the second on folio No. 4A which has for its preceding line simply *vathā v.'smatpitāmahabhrātṛcaraṅasya.*

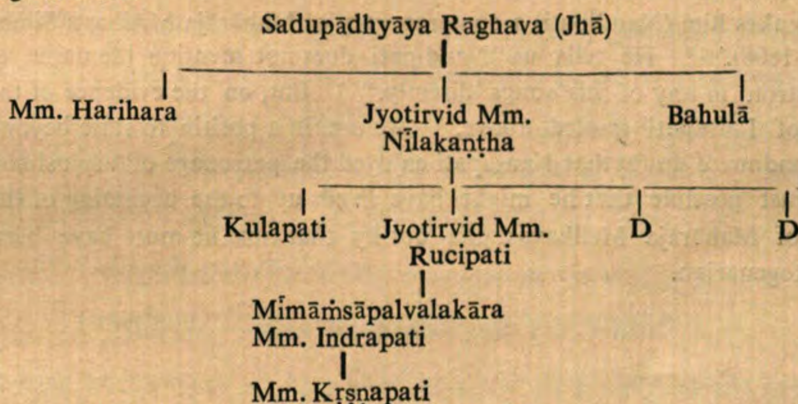
And we know that the verse cited first, i.e., the verse beginning with the words *gāndhārā guptadārās* etc. is the composition of Mm. Harihara of the *Beh ṭa* branch of the *Karamahā* family who is the author of *Sūktimuktāvalī*,[12] *Prabhāvatīpariṇaya*[13] etc. For, it is the 23rd verse of

11. Vide page 321 of volume I of Dr. J. Misra's "A History of Maithili Literature", Tirbhukti Publications, Allahabad, 1949.

12. Edited by Pt. Ramānātha Jhā, Published by The Newspapers and Publications Limited, Patna, 1949.

13 Ms with Pt. Dhirānanda Misra of the Mithila Research Institute.

the fifth chapter of the *Sūktimuktāvalī.*[14] Thus it follows that Mm. Harihara, the author of the *Sūktimuktāvalī*, happened to be the *pitāmahabhrātā* of our author Indrapati. The conclusion is confirmed by the *pañjī* records also. For, they tell us that Sadupādhyāya Rāghava (Jhā) of the *Behṭa* branch of the *Karamahā* family had two sons, the elder named Mm. Harihara and the younger Jyotirvid Mm. Nīlakaṇṭha and one daughter, Bahulā by name. Mm. Nīlakaṇṭha had two sons and two daughters. The elder son was named Kulapati whereas the younger Jyotirvid Mm. Rucipati. And this Rucipati was the father of Indrapati who has been mentioned in the *pañjis* as Mīmāṁsāpalvalakāra[15] Mm. Indrapati. And Indrapati had a son Mm. Kṛṣṇapati by name. We give below the genealogical table.



From the above table it is evident that Mm. Harihara, being the elder brother of Mm. Nīlakaṇṭha,[16] was the *Pitāmahabhrātā* of our author Indrapati.

So far as the age of Mm. Harihara and his brother Mm. Nīlakaṇṭha is concerned it has been established by the learned editor of the *Sūktimuktāvalī*, after a careful examination of the external and internal evidences, that they were born during the period 1595-1600A.D.[17] And

14. Vide page 21.

15. Ms. of it has been described by R. L. Mitra in his famous Notices vide Volume V No. 1959.

16. According to the learned editor of the Suktimuktāvali Mm. Nilakantha is described by his brother Mm. Harihara as "Kavikanthavibhusana" or an ornament for the neck of the poets (Vide Intro. p. 15) but I am inclined to construe the expression "nilakanthakavikanthavibhusanāya—Muktavali hariharena cirnā" to mean that Harihara composed the Muktāvali (or necklace of suktis) for the ornament for the neck of poet Nilakantha.

17. Vide Introduction (Page 18).

since Mm. Indrapati in his work speaks of Viṣṇusiṁha as the king of Mithilā *(Mithilādhipa)*[18] a date earlier than 1739 A.D., the date of his accession to the Mithilā Rāja throne, cannot be assigned to its composition. And supposing that Mm. Indrapati wrote this work, say, at the age of fifty we come to the conclusion that he was born in or about 1689 A.D. And, allowing for the institution of late marriage in those days, a gap of 89 years between the dates of the birth of the grandfather and the grandson does not appear unreasonable.

It has been stated above that in his work Mm. Indrapati informs us that Nandīpati, the Maithilī poet was held in high esteem by Viṣṇusiṁha, the king of Mithilā and so a period later than 1695 A.D. cannot be assigned to his birth. Dr. Misra is inclined to "confirm the tradition that makes him (Nandīpati) a contemporary of Mahārāja Mādhava Siṁha (1776-1808)."[19] He tells us "Nandīpati does not mention the name of his patron in any of his songs directly."[20] But, on the evidence of the verse of Indrapati quoted above, [21] we are in a positin to state beyond any shadow of doubt that Nandīpati enjoyed the patronage of Viṣṇusiṁha It is just possible that he might have lived up to the beginning of the reign of Mahārāja Mādhavasiṃha but by that time he must have been an octogenarian.

18. Vide supra.
19. Vide page 323 of volume I of his ("A History of Maithili Literature."
20. Ibid.
21. Vide supra.